

Prevention Control

Bed Bug Identification and Inspection

IDENTIFICATION

Bed bugs are flat, oval, wingless insects up to about one-fourth of an inch long. Unfed adults are reddish brown and resemble apple seeds in size and shape. Their bodies elongate after ingesting blood. Bed bug eggs are cylindrical and, like the newly hatched nymphs, about one-sixteenth of an inch long and somewhat translucent. Upon feeding, nymphs become bright red.

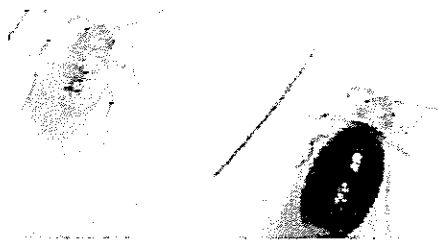
In most cases, pesticides and other control measures should not be applied until bed bugs are identified by an entomologist or other professional.



Adult bed bug

Photo: Armed Forces Pest Management Board

SIGNS OF INFESTATION



Bed bug nymphs before and after feeding
Photo: University of Minnesota

- Live or dead bed bugs
- Bed bug eggs (adhering to crevices)
- Shed exoskeletons (amber colored “shells”)
- Excrement (reddish brown to black specks and smears)
- Musty sweet odor (in heavily infested areas)

NOTE: The appearance of bed bug bites varies among individuals. Because there are many possible causes for skin reactions that resemble bites, the presence of marks consistent with bed bug bites

should be attributed to bed bugs only where specimens have been identified. Visible skin reactions may not appear for two weeks after bites, or they may not appear at all. It can be difficult to determine a bite’s origin.

INSPECTION

Adequate lighting, a flashlight and a magnifying glass or hand lens are essential when inspecting for bed bugs. Infestations are often confined to the mattress, box springs and bed frame. Usually they are found within 20 feet of the bed. However, in heavily infested structures bed bugs can be found hiding in virtually any crevice or void. Some places to look for bed bugs are:

- Bed frames, mattresses, box springs
- Nightstands
- Couches and recliners
- Floor cracks and grooves
- Edges of rugs and carpeting, tack strips
- Loosened wallpaper and peeling paint
- Behind baseboards, wall and ceiling moldings
- Wall art and decorations
- Switches, outlets and smoke detectors
- Window and door frames
- Drapery and blinds

Prevention Control

If You Get Bed Bugs

The first step in controlling a pest is to know the pest. Identifying bed bugs involves collecting at least one specimen from the suspected infestation and having it examined by an entomologist, pest management professional or other qualified individual. **The presence of bed bugs should be confirmed before any other steps are taken.**

GUIDELINES

- First, confirm that you have bed bugs by having specimens identified by an entomologist or pest management professional.
- **Avoid using aerosol “foggers.”** They do not effectively control bed bugs and can present a fire or explosion hazard. Also avoid using quantities of flammable liquids such as rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol. Do not use “roach powder” dusts containing ortho boric acid or borates – they are effective against cockroaches, but not bed bugs. Most over-the-counter pesticides will kill bed bugs only when directly applied to the bugs, and do not provide long-lasting control. If you must apply pesticides, always **READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.**
- Contact a pest management professional. Most bed bug infestations are not do-it-yourself projects. You may want to contact more than one company to provide estimates for managing the infestation. It’s best to be familiar with the basics of bed bugs and their control before you speak with pest control company representatives, so you can make an informed decision on which to choose. For tips on selecting a pest control company see our fact sheet at: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcpestcntrl.htm>
- Prepare for treatment by following your pest management professional’s suggestions, which may include eliminating clutter (unused/unwanted items), laundering, installing encasements (zippered covers) on mattresses and box springs, and using traps such as the Climbup™ on bed legs. If you cannot obtain traps, try wrapping carpet tape or duct tape (sticky side out) around bed legs to trap bed bugs.
- It is usually *not* necessary to discard mattresses, box springs, bed frames and other items. You can isolate your bed from bed bugs by installing traps beneath bed legs and keeping the bed and covers from touching the walls and floor. Make sure the bed is not in contact with things stored under it.
- Note that while vacuuming can remove some bed bugs, their eggs are sticky and adhere to surfaces, making them difficult to pick up. If you choose to vacuum, do it carefully so the vacuum cleaner doesn’t spread the bed bugs. Empty vacuum bags and canisters into

plastic bags that seal tightly, preventing the bugs from escaping, and check the vacuum's brushes and attachments for bed bugs immediately after vacuuming.

- To eliminate as many bed bug hiding places as possible, you can use caulk or other materials to seal cracks and gaps around pipes, vents, floor registers and light fixtures, as well as around phone, cable and electrical outlets.
- Expect follow-up inspections and treatments about every two weeks after the initial treatment. Inspection and treatment should continue at least until no bites or bed bugs are seen for a two-month period.